



Inside Congress

by United States Representative George R. Nethercutt, Jr.

For the week ending May 3, 2002

Welcome to this week's edition of Inside Congress. I am glad to share with you a little of my work in the national legislature. Please follow the listed links or contact my office for more information on the topics mentioned here.

WASHINGTON ECONOMY NEEDS SHOT IN THE ARM FROM TRADE BILL

Washington is the most trade-dependent state in the country. One in nine jobs in Washington depend on trade. The Senate is holding up passage of a bill to give the president Trade Promotion Authority and every day that goes by is lost market share for Washington products and lost income for Washington workers. Washington sold more than \$33.4 billion worth of exports last year, accounting for 20 percent of the state's total gross product. Income of workers in export-supported jobs is about 15 percent higher than the national average. Increasing the market-share for Washington goods through trade can add more jobs to our state and boost the economy.

Reps. Jennifer Dunn, Doc Hastings and I sent a letter to our senators in February urging the senators to work with Senate leaders to pass the legislation as soon as possible. The House of Representatives passed this legislation last year.

CANADA AGREES TO FIRMER REGULATION ON KEY METH INGREDIENT

I'm pleased that the Canadian Minister of Health has proposed stronger regulations on pseudoephedrine, a key ingredient in the recipe for meth.

Pseudoephedrine is heavily regulated in the United States, but few such regulations exist in Canada. As a result, U.S. meth manufacturers purchase Canadian pseudoephedrine on the black market in 1,000, 23,000, or 32,000 count jars. A June 7, 2001 bust in California netted 685 boxes of Canadian pseudoephedrine totaling 20.5 million tablets -- a \$4.5 million value. This quantity could produce 2,400 pounds of meth, with a street value of \$15 million.

The Canadian proposal will force those who wish to deal in pseudoephedrine to be licensed and permitted for import, export, production, and distribution, to prevent the use of the chemical in illegal activities.

Any progress to limit precursor chemicals and solve the meth problem in the United States will be completely undermined if Canada fails to regulate pseudoephedrine. The

ability of meth cooks and smugglers to legally purchase large amounts of this key ingredient must stop. I am pleased to see that our Northern neighbors are taking this problem seriously.

I am a cosponsor of H.Con.Res. 317, a bill expressing the sense of Congress that President Bush should open a dialogue with the Government of Canada to discuss the smuggling of large quantities of this precursor, as well as send a letter to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, urging him to focus on this issue. Earlier this year, I worked to secure \$1.3 million for treatment, law enforcement, and community education in eastern Washington's fight against methamphetamine abuse.

It is anticipated that the proposed regulations will be adopted later this year after a public comment period ends in July.

FIND OUT HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN IRS CITIZEN FORUM

The Internal Revenue Service is inviting civic-minded individuals to help improve the nation's tax agency by applying to be members of the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel. The panel provides a forum for citizens from each state to make suggestions regarding IRS decision-making.

Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP) members will provide opportunities to listen to citizens and make recommendations to the IRS and Treasury on customer-service issues, identify and prioritize taxpayer issues, and participate in meetings where taxpayers are invited to raise issues about their experiences with the IRS.

You can find more information at www.improveirs.org or call 1-866-602-2223 for an application form. Applications are due May 20, 2002.

LEGISLATION

This week I introduced **H.R. 4619**, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Army to provide a credit toward the non-federal share of the cost of the feasibility study for a flood control project in the vicinity of Sprague in Lincoln County.

Federal law does not permit Rural Development funds to be used as matching funds for another federal program. This bill would waive this requirement for Lincoln County to use a \$50,000 grant from USDA/Rural Development as matching funds with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to complete this flood control study.

ON THE FLOOR

Here is a recap of the legislative activity for the week:

H.Res. 392 - Expressing Solidarity with Israel in its Fight Against Terrorism. The resolution passed 352-21. Twenty-nine voted present. I voted yes.

H.Res. 392 expresses the House of Representative's solidarity with Israel as it takes necessary steps to provide security to its people by dismantling the terrorist infrastructure in Palestinian-controlled areas. The resolution recognizes Israel's right to self-defense and supports additional United States assistance to help Israel defend itself. It also condemns the recent wave of Palestinian suicide bombings, as well as the ongoing support and coordination of terror by Yasir Arafat and other members of the Palestinian leadership.

H.R. 2871 - Export-Import Bank Reauthorization Act of 2002. The bill passed by a voice vote. I voted yes.

The mission of the Export-Import Bank is to support export financing of U.S. goods and services. ExIm is designed to help U.S. exporters match competition from foreign, export credit agencies (ECAs) in Japan, Germany, France, Canada, and other countries. By law, ExIm is intended only to fill gaps in commercially available financing for U.S. exports by serving as a "lender of last resort" and not competing with private lenders. ExIm is also required by law to work toward securing international agreements to reduce government-subsidized export financing, thereby promoting free and fair trade. Congress last authorized ExIm in 1997 for a four-year term that expired September 30, 2001.

H.R. 2646 - Farm Security Act conference report. The bill passed by a vote of 280-141. I voted yes.

"The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002," often called the "Farm Bill," is the end result of more than two years and dozens of hearings in rural communities throughout the country, and more than 60 days of House and Senate conference to produce one bill balancing conservation, crops, nutrition (including food stamps and the free-lunch program), trade and rural development into the nation's comprehensive agricultural policy.

Farmers are facing the fifth year of record low prices and the lowest real net cash income since the Great Depression. As a result, Congress has spent nearly \$30 billion over the last four years in emergency assistance. While desperately needed, these ad hoc programs often left producers and their lenders in a state of uncertainty.

One of the primary reasons for acting quickly on the farm bill was to end dependence on ad hoc legislation. This bill provides better, more flexible help for farmers, and, while the emergency bills have averaged \$7 billion per year, this farm bill averages less than \$5 billion per year in additional spending to help farmers.

Once this five-year bill is passed by the Senate, it will go to the president to be signed into law.

H.R. 64 - Establishing Deputy Administrator for Science and Technology of the Environmental Protection Agency. The bill passed by a voice vote. I voted yes.

H.R. 64 establishes a Deputy Director for Science and Technology at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), equal in rank to the current Deputy Administrator and reporting directly to the Administrator. The new Deputy will be responsible for coordinating scientific research among the scientific and regulatory arms of the Agency to ensure that sound science informs regulatory decisions.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

I always enjoy hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance to you in any matter. Here are some of the ways you may reach me, especially if you know of others who may want to receive this report each week:

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